



**Request for Proposal
Bidder Question/VCE Answers
RFP REF: 2026-VCE FOCUS
Updated: September 24, 2026**

Question #	Question	Answer
1	In "Research Specifications" the RFP mentions that VCE wishes to have virtual-only sessions and in-person-only sessions as separate groups, and that hybrid sessions should not be used. Will VCE consider proposals that only offer virtual sessions?	No
2	In "Deliverables" the RFP mentions both a summary of preliminary findings within two weeks of completing fieldwork, as well as a full written report within two weeks of focus group completion. Can you clarify if "completing fieldwork" and "focus group completion" is the same thing — and if so, would VCE consider preliminary findings within one week of completion and a full report within three weeks of completion?	VCE intended "completion of fieldwork" and "focus group completion" to refer to the conclusion of the focus group research activities. VCE recognizes that firms may have different reporting approaches and would consider a summary of preliminary findings within one week of completion and a final written report within two to three weeks of completion, provided the proposed timeline supports the project's overall schedule.
3	In "Deliverables" is a full written report with findings, key themes, and actionable recommendations acceptable if delivered in PowerPoint format?	No
4	May the sample discussion guide and sample focus group report be included as an appendix to the proposal?	Yes
5	What is the not to exceed amount allocated for this project?	VCE has a preliminary budget approved for Focus Groups in 2026 of \$75,000.
6	Does the "up to eight pages" limit for the "Summary aligned with the 'Scope of Work'" also apply to the "proposed research approach and methodology, a sample discussion guide or screening questionnaire, and one redacted sample focus group report" that are also part of requirement VI.2?	The "up to eight pages" limit applies to the Summary aligned with the Scope of Work. Supporting materials, such as the proposed research approach and methodology, sample discussion guide or screening questionnaire, and redacted sample focus group report, may be included as attachments or appendices and are not intended to count toward the eight-page limit.
7	Does VCE have a target ratio or expected number of virtual vs. in-person focus groups?	The target number of Focus Groups is four (4) total: one (1) in-person Focus Group in English; one (1) in-person Focus Group in Spanish; one (1) virtual Focus Group in English; one (1) virtual Focus Group in Spanish. This target may be modified depending on recruitment results.
8	Does VCE have existing relationships with community-based organizations to assist with recruitment?	Yes, but there is currently no budget allocated for community-based organization (CBO) initiated recruitment, so it will be subject to CBOs' willingness and ability.
9	Will VCE provide existing creatives and messaging to test?	Yes
10	Will customer lists be provided for contact, or will lists need to be procured by the selected firm?	VCE will provide contact information. Please note that firms engaging with customer information will need to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) and comply with privacy and customer confidentiality practices.
11	If customer lists are provided, will segmentation variables be available?	Yes
12	Does VCE have existing relationships or preferred protocols for engagement with Tribal nations?	Yes

13	Does VCE envision commercial and agricultural customers participating in conventional focus groups, or would it consider alternative qualitative formats for hard-to-recruit segments?	VCE would consider alternative formats.
14	When VCE refers to a “representative mix,” does VCE intend qualitative coverage of key customer segments and communities rather than statistically representative sampling?	Yes
15	Does VCE have priority segments or minimum quota expectations?	VCE has priority segments.
16	Does VCE have a target number/range of focus groups and an anticipated or preferred mix of in-person versus virtual sessions for proposal pricing and evaluation?	The target number of Focus Groups is four (4) total: one (1) in-person Focus Group in English; one (1) in-person Focus Group in Spanish; one (1) virtual Focus Group in English; one (1) virtual Focus Group in Spanish. This target may be modified depending on recruitment results.
17	Does VCE have a preferred/assumed number of participants per group for purposes of budgeting and proposal comparison?	No, but depending on cost VCE may establish a minimum participant threshold.
18	Does VCE have a preference between fully Spanish-language moderated groups and English-language groups supported by live interpretation?	VCE prefers fully Spanish-language moderated groups.
19	Should proposers assume Spanish-language groups require Spanish-language recruitment, participant communications, materials, moderation, and transcription?	Yes
20	Will the selected firm be responsible for locating and contracting with in-person facilities, or will VCE provide facilities?	This arrangement will be finalized after contract with the firm is executed and project plans are finalized.
21	Should proposers assume responsibility for arranging meals, childcare, transportation support/reimbursement, etc.?	VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include participant stipends and other direct project expenses, such as venue rental, meals, childcare, transportation support, interpretation, printing, postage, or similar costs, either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
22	Does VCE have preferred or anticipated amounts for participant stipends and other participant-support costs?	No. VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include participant stipends and other direct project expenses, such as venue rental, meals, childcare, transportation support, interpretation, printing, postage, or similar costs, either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
23	Does VCE require verbatim transcripts for every session, and should Spanish-language sessions be transcribed in Spanish, English, or both?	Yes. Spanish-language transcriptions should be transcribed in Spanish and translated to English.
24	Does VCE expect audio or video recordings, and are there specific file-format, storage, or retention requirements?	VCE expects audio recordings for in-person sessions (video optional), and video recordings for virtual sessions. There are no specific file format requirements. Customer privacy and confidentiality practices apply to records storage and retention.

25	Does VCE have an established budget range or not-to-exceed amount? If not, are there internal assumptions regarding the anticipated scale of fieldwork that proposers should use when developing fixed-fee proposals?	VCE has a preliminary budget approved for Focus Groups in 2026 of \$75,000.
26	Should proposers price based on their recommended number of groups and participants, or does VCE want all proposers to use a common assumed fieldwork volume for purposes of price comparison?	VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
27	Does VCE have a timeline in mind for this work or a date by which it would like final deliverables completed?	Target timeframe is to complete all work and reports by the end of Q2 2027, but this may be modified.
28	Does VCE have a ballpark budget for this work or a maximum allowable budget?	Please see Question #25.
29	Does VCE have an anticipated budget range or not-to-exceed amount for the engagement?	Please see Question #25.
30	Does VCE have a preferred minimum or anticipated range for the number of focus groups, and is there a target timeframe for completing the sessions?	The target number of Focus Groups is four (4) total: one (1) in-person Focus Group in English; one (1) in-person Focus Group in Spanish; one (1) virtual Focus Group in English; one (1) virtual Focus Group in Spanish. This target may be modified depending on recruitment results. Target timeframe is to complete all work and reports by the end of Q2 2027, but this may be modified.
31	Does VCE expect dedicated focus groups for each identified population, including residential, commercial, agricultural, CARE/FERA, Spanish-speaking, Tribal, rural, and inter-generational customers, or may proposers recommend a segmentation structure that addresses multiple characteristics within individual groups?	Proposers may recommend a segmentation structure that addresses multiple characteristics within individual groups.
32	What customer data and contact information will VCE provide to support recruitment, including for opted-out, commercial, and agricultural customers?	VCE will provide contact information, including customer name, address, email address, customer class, rate schedule, enrollment status, preferred billing language, and special designations (CARE/FERA/Med Baseline, etc.) Please note that firms engaging with customer information will need to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) and comply with privacy and customer confidentiality practices.
33	In addition to participant stipends, should other direct recruitment and session costs, such as venue rental, meals, childcare, transportation support, interpretation, printing, postage, or similar expenses, be included within the fixed project fee, or should any of these costs be separately itemized?	VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include participant stipends and other direct project expenses, such as venue rental, meals, childcare, transportation support, interpretation, printing, postage, or similar costs, either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
34	Does VCE require privacy or cybersecurity insurance coverage for this engagement beyond the insurance requirements identified in the Sample Agreement?	Privacy and cybersecurity liability requirements may be addressed during contract negotiations with the selected proposer.
35	Does VCE have existing customer research, opt-out data, program evaluations, prior focus group findings, or other research that will be made available to the selected firm to inform the research design?	Yes

36	For testing customer messaging and creative, does VCE anticipate providing existing messaging and creative materials for the selected firm to test, or should the selected firm anticipate developing concepts or materials for testing as part of the scope?	VCE will provide existing messaging and creative materials for the selected firm to test. VCE is open to the selected firm developing concepts or materials for testing.
37	The RFP notes that VCE may request a quantitative survey as an add-on task. Should proposers include a separate scope and price for this optional task in their proposal, or would the scope and pricing be negotiated separately if VCE elects to proceed with a survey?	The scope and pricing would be negotiated separately if VCE elects to proceed with a survey. VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include direct project expenses either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
38	The Deliverables section requires both a summary of preliminary findings within two weeks of completing fieldwork and a full written report within two weeks of focus group completion. Are both deliverables intended to be completed within the same two-week period, or is the full report expected on a later schedule following VCE review of the preliminary findings?	VCE intended "completion of fieldwork" and "focus group completion" to refer to the conclusion of the focus group research activities. VCE recognizes that firms may have different reporting approaches and would consider a summary of preliminary findings within one week of completion and a final written report within two to three weeks of completion, provided the proposed timeline supports the project's overall schedule.
39	The Deliverables section calls for a full written report and a presentation to VCE staff and, if requested, the Board or Community Advisory Committee. Does VCE want these as designed, brand-compliant documents suitable for a public meeting, or is a standard written report and slide format acceptable?	Standard written report and slide format is acceptable.
40	The Research Specifications reference bilingual materials and legible large-format visuals. Should participant-facing materials be produced in both English and Spanish, and should they follow VCE's existing brand and style guides?	Yes, and yes.
41	Does VCE have existing relationships with community-based organizations or trusted messengers in Woodland, Winters, Davis, and unincorporated Yolo County that the selected firm should coordinate with for recruitment outreach?	Please see Question #8.
42	Does participation on a proposing team for RFP 2026-VCE-FOCUS, as prime or as a subcontractor, create a conflict of interest or otherwise affect a firm's eligibility or evaluation under RFP 2026MWSMS for Marketing, Website and Social Media Services?	No
43	Has Valley Clean Energy conducted similar customer research previously? If so, is this project intended to continue or build on that work, and will prior findings or materials be made available to the selected firm?	This is a new scope of work. Findings from previous customer research will be made available to the successful firm.
44	Beyond the anticipated contract start date of December 1, 2026, are there any known project milestones or preferred timing for recruitment, fieldwork, reporting, and presentation of findings that proposers should incorporate into their approach	Target timeframe is to complete all work and reports by the end of Q2 2027, but this may be modified.
45	Is there an anticipated budget or budget range for this engagement that proposers should use in developing the recommended scope and methodology?	Please see Question #25.
46	Does VCE have an approximate target or expectation for the relative emphasis on residential, commercial, and agricultural customers, or should proposers recommend the appropriate allocation among these audiences?	VCE does not have a target for customer class participant allocation, and it may depend on recruitment efforts. Proposers may recommend a segmentation structure that addresses multiple characteristics within individual groups, and proposed allocations.

47	Does VCE have existing relationships with community-based organizations or trusted messengers that it would expect or encourage the selected firm to work with for recruitment and outreach?	Please see Question #8.
48	What variables are expected to be available in any VCE customer data provided to support recruitment? For example, will the data identify customer geography, customer class, CARE/FERA status, UltraGreen enrollment, opt-out or re-enrollment status, language preference, and contact information?	Please see Question #32.
49	Can VCE provide CARE/FERA enrollment information by geography, or otherwise identify communities or ZIP codes with higher CARE/FERA enrollment, to help guide recruitment and venue selection?	Yes
50	For Tribal participation, does VCE envision recruiting individual Tribal members as residential customers, engaging Tribal representatives or stakeholders, or both? Does VCE have an established relationship or preferred protocol for outreach to the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation?	VCE has established relationships and will be the main point of contact for Tribal nations in our service territory. Participant recruitment strategy will be discussed after contract execution and before participant recruitment.
51	How is VCE defining “inter-generational households” for purposes of this research – for example, households with adults from more than one generation, or specifically households containing three or more generations?	VCE intends "inter-generational households" to mean households that include adults from more than one generation living together (e.g. adult children living with parents, or grandparents living with adult children and grandchildren). A household does not need to include three generations to qualify unless otherwise specified during recruitment.
52	Will VCE be able to provide contact information for customers who have opted out of VCE service, including customers who have subsequently re-enrolled, for purposes of recruitment?	Yes
53	Does VCE have a budget range or not-to-exceed amount for this engagement, and does that figure include participant stipends and in-person amenities such as meals, childcare, and transportation support? Since proposals will be evaluated on overall value rather than lowest cost, a range would let firms size the number of groups appropriately.	Please see Question #25. VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include participant stipends and other direct project expenses, such as venue rental, meals, childcare, transportation support, interpretation, printing, postage, or similar costs, either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
54	Does VCE have a target number of focus groups or total participants in mind, or is the proposer setting that entirely? Is there a preferred split between virtual-only and in-person-only groups?	Please see Question #30.
55	Will VCE provide customer contact data for recruitment, and if so, roughly how long does execution of PG&E's data-sharing non-disclosure agreement typically take after award? Can that NDA be initiated before the December 1 contract start so recruitment is not delayed?	Yes. VCE anticipates that the NDA process could easily be completed by 12/1/26.
56	What is VCE's expectation for engaging Tribal nations in this study? Has VCE established a consultation relationship or protocol with the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, and would VCE prefer that outreach be routed through VCE or initiated by the selected firm?	Please see Question #50.

57	Does VCE expect agricultural producers and processors to participate in standard focus groups, or will VCE consider depth interviews or another format better suited to that segment's availability?	Please see Question #13.
58	Regarding Exhibit D, item A(5): the RFP notes privacy and cybersecurity liability may be reduced or eliminated based on scope. Given that this engagement involves limited personally identifiable information and no systems integration, will VCE consider a reduced limit? What limit would VCE consider responsive?	VCE has not established a specific reduced limit that would be considered responsive for this engagement. Privacy and cybersecurity liability requirements, including any potential reduction or waiver, will be evaluated based on the final scope, data handling requirements, and project risks, and may be addressed during contract negotiations with the selected proposer.
59	Will VCE consider a carve-out under Section 14 for a consultant's pre-existing proprietary research instruments, analytic frameworks, and templates, with VCE retaining full ownership of all study-specific deliverables and data?	Indemnification and intellectual property requirements will be evaluated based on the final scope, data handling requirements, and project risks, and may be addressed during contract negotiations with the selected proposer.
60	Which VCE marketing materials and creative will be tested under research objective 6, and will those assets be available at kickoff? Will the incumbent marketing consultant participate in design or debrief sessions?	Materials and creative to be tested will be finalized with the successful firm. Findings from previous customer research will be made available to the successful firm, and the incumbent marketing consultant may be involved in design/debrief sessions.
61	How will "CCA and energy industry experience" be weighted within the 70 percent Experience and Qualifications criterion relative to the other three sub-bullets? Would relevant experience held by a named subcontractor or senior advisor be credited to the proposing team?	The evaluation criteria are intended to be considered holistically. CCA and energy industry experience will be considered alongside the other qualifications, experience, and capabilities presented in the proposal. Relevant experience and expertise of proposed subcontractors, senior advisors, and other key team members may be considered as part of the evaluation of the overall proposing team, provided their roles and responsibilities are clearly identified in the proposal.
62	Do the 3-page executive summary and 8-page scope summary limits apply to the entire submission, or are resumes, the sample discussion guide, the redacted sample report, references, and the fee schedule excluded from those counts?	The intent of the eight-page limit is to encourage concise responses to the Scope of Work summary. VCE does not intend to restrict the inclusion of supporting materials necessary to demonstrate the proposer's qualifications and approach. Proposers should keep narrative responses concise and may include relevant supporting materials, such as sample discussion guides, screening questionnaires, and redacted sample reports.
63	Will VCE give GO 156 consideration to a firm certified as an LGBT-owned business enterprise, and does VCE require CPUC Supplier Clearinghouse certification specifically, or will NGLCC certification be recognized?	VCE does not require GO 156 certification. Proposers may include all relevant certifications in their proposal, up to the identified page limits.

64	Does VCE have a minimum or anticipated range for the number of focus groups and participants per group that proposers should use as a common basis for developing and comparing fixed project fees?	The target number of Focus Groups is four (4) total: one (1) in-person Focus Group in English; one (1) in-person Focus Group in Spanish; one (1) virtual Focus Group in English; one (1) virtual Focus Group in Spanish. This target may be modified depending on recruitment results. VCE does not have an anticipated range for the number of participants, but may establish a minimum participant threshold depending on cost. VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include participant stipends and other direct project expenses, such as venue rental, meals, childcare, transportation support, interpretation, printing, postage, or similar costs, either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
65	Does VCE expect residential, commercial, agricultural, CARE/FERA, Tribal, Spanish-speaking, and inter-generational participants to be organized into separate focus groups, or may compatible segments be combined? Please identify any segments requiring a dedicated group and any minimum participant quotas.	Please see Question #46.
66	Which customer-status groups must be recruited—current default-service customers, UltraGreen customers, customers who opted out, former customers who re-enrolled, or a combination? For commercial and agricultural participants, must the respondent be the account holder or an individual responsible for energy-purchasing decisions?	Recruitment strategy will be discussed after contract execution.
67	If VCE provides customer contact data, what fields and customer indicators will be available—for example, jurisdiction, customer class, CARE/FERA status, preferred language, UltraGreen enrollment, opt-out or re-enrollment status, mailing address, email address, and telephone number—and when will the data be provided?	VCE will provide contact information, including customer name, address, email address, customer class, rate schedule, enrollment status, preferred billing language, and special designations (CARE/FERA/Med Baseline, etc.) Please note that firms engaging with customer information will need to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) and comply with privacy and customer confidentiality practices. The data will be provided after the contract with the successful firm is executed and the NDA is signed, and prior to final Focus Group design.
68	Please provide or describe PG&E's data-sharing nondisclosure agreement and confirm the security, encryption, access-control, data-retention, deletion, breach-notification, and subcontractor-access requirements that will apply to customer contact data.	VCE does not currently have authorization to distribute PG&E's data-sharing nondisclosure agreement. The applicable agreement and associated requirements will be provided to the selected contractor. Contractors should assume that any customer contact information will be subject to applicable confidentiality, privacy, and data-security requirements. Specific requirements regarding security controls, encryption, access management, data retention, data destruction, incident notification, and subcontractor access will be communicated through the applicable data-sharing agreement and project contracting documents.

69	Will VCE facilitate introductions to community-based organizations, trusted messengers, and relevant Tribal communities, or must the selected firm establish these relationships independently? Should proposals include compensation for community partners, and are there specific Tribal consultation, recruitment, or data-governance protocols that must be followed?	Outreach strategy and budget details will be discussed on a case-by-case basis with the successful firm.
70	Is the selected firm responsible for securing and paying for all in-person venues, meals, childcare, and transportation support? Please identify any VCE-provided facilities and any required childcare licensing, background-check, insurance, or transportation-reimbursement standards that should be incorporated into the fixed fee.	VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include participant stipends and other direct project expenses, such as venue rental, meals, childcare, transportation support, interpretation, printing, postage, or similar costs, either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
71	May proposers recommend the participant-stipend amount, payment method, and timing? Please clarify whether stipends are required for both virtual and in-person participants and whether VCE has a preferred stipend range.	Proposers may recommend the participant stipend amount, payment method, and timing based on their experience and proposed recruitment approach. VCE does not currently have a preferred stipend amount or range. VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include participant stipends and other direct project expenses, such as venue rental, meals, childcare, transportation support, interpretation, printing, postage, or similar costs, either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
72	Will VCE provide the messages, creative concepts, bills, program descriptions, and other materials to be tested? If culturally adapted Spanish-language content is unavailable, should the selected firm include translation and transcreation development in its proposed scope and fixed fee?	Materials and creative to be tested will be finalized with the successful firm. Findings from previous customer research will be made available to the successful firm. VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include direct project expenses either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
73	Does VCE prefer Spanish-language sessions led directly by a bilingual moderator, or will moderation through a separate live interpreter be evaluated equally? For Spanish sessions, must the contractor provide Spanish transcripts, English translations, or both, and does VCE require audio recording, video recording, or both?	VCE prefers fully Spanish-language moderated groups. VCE expects audio recordings for in-person sessions (video optional), and video recordings for virtual sessions. Spanish-language transcriptions should be transcribed in Spanish and translated to English.
74	Given the anticipated December 1, 2026 contract start and the requirement to begin outreach at least two months before the first session, what are VCE's target dates for recruitment launch, the first and final focus groups, preliminary findings, the final report, and the findings presentation?	Target timeframe is to complete all work and reports by the end of Q2 2027, but this may be modified. Project milestones and target dates will be discussed with the successful firm.

75	The RFP requires both preliminary findings and the full written report within two weeks after focus-group completion. Are these deliverables intended to be submitted simultaneously? Please distinguish their expected contents and identify the number and timing of VCE review and revision cycles that should be included in the fixed fee.	VCE intended "completion of fieldwork" and "focus group completion" to refer to the conclusion of the focus group research activities. VCE would consider a summary of preliminary findings within one week of completion and a final written report within two to three weeks of completion, provided the proposed timeline supports the project's overall schedule. Review and revision cycles will be discussed with the successful firm and will be determined after contract is executed.
76	Should proposers provide optional pricing for the possible quantitative survey? If so, please provide planning assumptions for the target population, sample size, languages, questionnaire length, collection mode, geographic and customer-segment quotas, analysis, and deliverables.	VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include pricing for the quantitative study. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
77	May a proposer satisfy the experience, staffing, and reference requirements through the combined qualifications of the firm, its principals, and named subcontractors? If so, may projects performed by key personnel for previous employers and projects led by proposed subcontractors be included among the three required references?	Yes. VCE will consider the qualifications and experience of the proposed project team as a whole, including the prime consultant, key personnel, and identified subcontractors. Experience, staffing qualifications, and references may include relevant work performed by key personnel for previous employers and by proposed subcontractors, provided their roles and anticipated involvement in the project are clearly described in the proposal.
78	Has VCE established an anticipated project budget, budget range, or not-to-exceed amount that it can disclose? In addition, please confirm whether the resulting contract will be fixed-price, time-and-materials subject to a ceiling, or a hybrid arrangement, because the proposal instructions require a fixed project fee while the sample agreement contemplates hourly rates and a not-to-exceed amount.	Please see Question #25. VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include direct project expenses either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
79	The RFP asks the selected firm to recommend the methodology, group structure, and segmentation plan. For proposal-comparison purposes, does VCE have an anticipated minimum, maximum, or preferred range for the total number of focus groups, or should proposers independently recommend the number they believe is methodologically appropriate?	The target number of Focus Groups is four (4) total: one (1) in-person Focus Group in English; one (1) in-person Focus Group in Spanish; one (1) virtual Focus Group in English; one (1) virtual Focus Group in Spanish. This target may be modified depending on recruitment results.
80	Does VCE expect residential, commercial, agricultural, CARE/FERA, Tribal, Spanish-speaking, rural, and inter-generational audiences to be addressed through separate dedicated groups, or may proposers recommend an intentionally overlapping/intersectional design that ensures representation of each priority audience while allowing groups to reflect customers' real-world characteristics?	Please see Question #46.
81	The RFP indicates that VCE may provide customer contact data to support recruitment. Can VCE clarify which customer information is expected to be available to the selected firm—for example, customer type, geography, CARE/FERA status, language preference, rate/service selection, opt-out or re-enrollment status, UltraGreen participation, email, telephone number, and mailing address—and approximately how complete those records are?	Please see Question #67. VCE does not attest to the completeness of information from external sources, but it is generally sufficient for business operations.

82	VCE identifies testing of messaging and creative, including culturally adapted messaging/transcreation versus direct translation, as a research objective. Will VCE provide existing English- and Spanish-language communications, creative materials, and/or alternative transcreated materials for testing, or does VCE expect the selected research firm to develop alternative translations, transcreations, or stimuli as part of the engagement?	VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include translation and transcreation costs either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
83	Should proposers assume responsibility for identifying and contracting in-person venues and arranging meals, childcare, interpretation, and transportation support or reimbursement? If so, should these costs be included within the fixed project fee, shown separately as pass-through expenses, or otherwise itemized?	VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include participant stipends and other direct project expenses, such as venue rental, meals, childcare, transportation support, interpretation, printing, postage, or similar costs, either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
84	With the contract anticipated to begin December 1, 2026, does VCE have a preferred window for the first focus groups and completion of fieldwork? Because the RFP calls for outreach to begin at least two months before the first session, clarification would help proposers develop the most realistic recruitment and fieldwork schedule.	Target timeframe is to complete all work and reports by the end of Q2 2027, but this may be modified.
85	Exhibit D lists privacy and cybersecurity liability coverage of at least \$5 million per occurrence, while also noting that the requirement may be reduced or eliminated based on the scope of services. Can VCE confirm whether the \$5 million cybersecurity liability requirement will apply to this engagement and, if not, what coverage level VCE expects from the selected consultant?	Privacy and cybersecurity liability requirements will be evaluated based on the final scope, data handling requirements, and project risks, and may be addressed during contract negotiations with the selected proposer.
86	The sample agreement requires subcontractors to carry insurance in substantial conformity with the consultant's coverage. For purposes of this engagement, would local participant recruiters, interpreters/translators, childcare providers, focus-group facilities or venues, transportation providers, and similar logistical vendors be treated as subcontractors subject to those insurance requirements?	All questions regarding subcontractors and insurance will be answered within contract negotiations, after the contract is awarded to the successful firm.